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ChildFund
International

"COMMUNITY SERVICES TO VULNERABLE GROUPS"
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Component III "Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities"

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I. PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The number of persons with disabilities in Belarus exceeds 500,000. There are 119,000 children with special needs, including about 30,000 children with disabilities among them. Discrimination and marginalization of adults and young people with disabilities is a typical social phenomenon for Belarus - while adults are often excluded from social and economic life, and decision-making practices, children with disabilities suffer from insufficient access to education and appropriate quality of services as well as social exclusion and lack of participation opportunities.

In October 2008 – September 2015 ChildFund Belarus implemented the four-year project “Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities” funded by USAID in Belarus under the Community Services to Vulnerable Groups cooperative agreement. The project component aimed to include Belarusian people with disabilities into mainstream society and to strengthen capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities.

The project has three main objectives:

1. Build the organizational, networking and advocacy capacity of grassroots organizations supporting PWD and their families;
2. Support advocacy efforts by PWD grassroots organizations to promote inclusion;
3. Support I of introduction and development of inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities.

II. PROJECT OUTCOMES

Project FY2014-2015. Outcomes

This year, ChildFund focused its efforts on final evaluation, analyses of the project achievements, lessons learned as well as additional efforts ensuring long-term sustainability of the introduced changes while addressing the current challenges faced by the educational system.

Development of Concept Paper on Inclusive Education

ChildFund enhanced its community-based efforts to promote inclusive education by advocacy efforts on the national level. First, ChildFund initiated a Roundtable meeting with different stakeholders to discuss the draft of the Concept paper on Inclusive Education issued by Ministry of Education. Following the results and decision of the Roundtable discussion, NGOs submitted a number of appeals to the Ministry with their suggestions. Then, ChildFund met with the Ministry of Education to promote the idea of the creation of the inter-sectoral working group that will help further develop a Concept paper on inclusive education. After the meeting and by the request of the Ministry of Education ChildFund provided series of suggestions to be included into Concept paper. Later, Ministry of Education issued its official decision about the creation of inter-sectoral working group on inclusive education. The group comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Education, special teachers, university faculties and two NGOs (ChildFund and its partner NGO Special World). Through participation in the group, ChildFund had the opportunity to directly influence policy development in the country. ChildFund provided a series of suggestions to ensure that the Concept is well justified and reflects the fundamental principles of inclusion, and covers the all areas to changes that should be done educational system in order to successfully implement inclusive education in Belarus. In May 2015 the final version of the Concept was sent to the authorities in the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and others for the official approval.

The creation of the Multidisciplinary Expert group with the inclusion of NGO representatives was the result of successful advocacy efforts by ChildFund and its partner NGOs. This was the first time when the Ministry of Education used multidisciplinary expert group to develop policy document; before it was a sole responsibility of one or two assigned persons from the Ministry. Expertise and opinions of the other actors of civil society were not considered. According to the Ministry of Education this method of joint work with the experts from NGOs, universities, re-training institutes, social services proved its effectiveness and they are going to use in the future.

Thus, along with further promotion of rights for education for children with disabilities the project helped to make one more step towards development of public dialogue for policy development and building civil society in Belarus. The Concept paper was approved by all authorities and entered into force on September 4, 2015.

Further development of inclusive approaches in pilot communities (Baranovichi, Zhodino, Mozyr)

ChildFund's program specialists completed a series of working meetings with the specialists and organizations from the project sites (i.e. local Habilitation centers, Departments for Education, local parent associations) aimed to plan further development of inclusive education in the targeted communities. ChildFund specialists prepared a methodology for the meetings and assisted community working groups during the process. During the meetings the community working groups comprised of parents, specialists and trainers on inclusive education mastered new skills of result-oriented planning through the discussion of planning basics, assessment of the needs, environment and resources, and stating SMART objectives. The meetings helped to start the planning process and elaborate the draft plans for further development of inclusive education in the pilot communities. The blueprint versions of the plans for all communities supported by ChildFund (Mozyr, Baranovichi, Zhodino, and Smorgon) were presented to the district Departments for Education in June 2015. Then, the development plans on inclusive education were incorporated into the Department Working Plan for academic year 2015-2016.

Strengthening NGO networking and advocacy in promoting inclusion of children with disabilities.

This year ChildFund supported a series of NGO working meetings aimed to further improve their networking and cooperation in area of inclusive education. During the meetings leading NGOs identified their roles and priorities in promoting inclusive education that was included in their working plan. Along with activity for NGO networking/cooperation/ advocacy the working plan included partnership with mass media and local authorities. The working plan was translated into the Concept paper for three years that was submitted on behalf of NGO consortium for EU funding in February. The objectives and activities of new project reflects priorities for NGO networking and cooperation that ChildFund's partner NGOs identified during the course of the NGO networking meetings conducted last project year.

ChildFund supported the preparation of the Concept paper and full proposal for a new EU opportunity and advanced networking opportunity for participating NGOs. Within the working process, they identified their own roles and competencies in building NGO network and promotion of inclusive education. As the result of their joint work on the proposal, the participating NGOs advanced trust and collaboration and decreased competitive attitude that existed before. This experience helped to overcome fragmentation in NGO sector by strengthening NGO collaboration around inclusive education.

Strengthening capacity of educational entities providing training and re-training for teachers, masters of schools and ECD specialists

ChildFund provided its methodological and financial support to Baranovichi University to solidify their role of the national leader in inclusive education in Belarus and hosted a national Round table on inclusive education. Forty participants representing universities, Re-training institutes, NGOs working with children with disabilities and their families, and Ministry of Education. The roundtable participants consolidated and assessed resources on inclusive education that have been already developed in Belarus and discussed its utilization by all interested parties. The meeting issued a Resolution addressed to the Ministry of Education that (1) recommends using curriculum on inclusive education developed by Baranovichi University (the result of sub-grant supported by ChildFund) and Belarusian State Pedagogic University in programs of teacher training and retraining, (2) advises the trainer manual '*Inclusive education*' developed by ChildFund for sensitization workshops for education authorities, educators, children and parents, (3) support further development of methodology resources that will ensure the quality of inclusive education. TOT training on Inclusive Education was conducted to expand the training team. The training group consisted of faculty of 100% of universities providing teacher training programs. It is expected that they incorporate inclusive education into university curriculum for future teachers.

Sustainability of the extended National trainer's team on inclusive education was enhanced through series of the working meetings. The trainer team members identified their priority areas for its further development and work after the

completion of the project. Trainers of the national team on inclusive education provided continued their work and conducted 10 trainings to various audiences: children, education specialists, and education authorities. ChildFund finalized the publication of a Trainer's manual on inclusive education. The manual was developed by the ChildFund trainers that included practitioners, academics, NGOs that work with children with disabilities and their parents. The manual was distributed to all partners including pilot schools, universities, re-training institutes, and NGOs.

The project achieved the goal of increased inclusion of persons with disabilities through growth of civic activism and leadership of people with disabilities, improved quality and accessibility of community based services, improved capacity of education specialists and policy makers on national, regional, and local levels; and also the growth of professionalism and networking between DPOs (organizations of people with disabilities).

Summary of Project Outcomes for Life of Project

The project activities implemented in 2008-2015 resulted in multiple outputs and outcomes, most of which exceeded our expectations.

Partner DPOs/Parents Associations improved organizational and networking capacity of that was demonstrated by their efforts to improve internal capacity of their organizations, provide sustainability of PWD services established within ChildFund's sub-grants. Significant changes happened in NGO/DPO cooperation due to their participation in the long-term training programs provided by ChildFund over the course of project implementation. This includes training courses on leadership and advocacy, NGO organizational development, project cycle management, monitoring and evaluation, PR and fundraising, volunteer management, workshops on advocacy with international and local experts, training on inclusive education, social interactive theater, parenting skills enhancement program. ChildFund ensured the effectiveness of its capacity building intervention through participatory approach to its design and implementation.

ChildFund's training course built the leadership and advocacy capacity of children, their parents and adults with disabilities. In a context where there are very low expectations for what people with disabilities can achieve and there are few opportunities for PWD to participate in community life and decision-making, PWDs and their families face issues of discrimination and disempowerment. The course helps PWDs and their families become aware of their rights and find and use their voice. Alumni of the course form peer-to-peer networks and use their new knowledge and skills to promote inclusion of PWD in social and economic life. They reported improvement of self-advocacy skills as well as introduction of changes in their organizations through participatory management and decision making, improved fundraising, PR, and human resources management, as well as improved partnership with other organizations and authorities.

The training course helped to develop new cohort of PWD leaders able to effectively deal with issues of stigma, discrimination, stereotypes against children and people with disabilities, personal development and skills, as well as building partnerships among local DPOs.

Natasha and her mom Svetlana, participants of Leadership Course, organized series of their own training 'Inclusion or Illusion' to 250 school children were sensitized to the importance of inclusive education.





Elena, an alumna of Leadership course for adults, became a ChildFund trainer in Leadership course for children and youth. She became inspirational role model for young people with disabilities and their parents

It is important to note that just three years ago the DPOs saw each other as competitors and were reluctant to engage in any sort of partnership, which was clearly demonstrated at the NGO Forum. However, after graduating from the training courses, the participants developed trust towards each other and realized that each organization has its place in the inclusive education area and that together greater outcomes can be achieved. Thus, by the end of this year, the NGO/DPOs participants demonstrated eagerness to develop an NGO network/alliance and to work together towards the promotion of inclusion. The project supported them with working meetings/workshops on network development.

According to survey conducted by ChildFund among project participants 92,6% of them recognize need for DPOs networking/coalitions, 85% reported established new services/projects as the result of their participation in ChildFund project , 48% increased their advocacy efforts, and 74% mentioned growing number of initiatives/ projects that were developed and implemented in partnership with the other organizations. 51,8% of respondents reported increase of influence of their organizations in the communities(see Figure 3:Positive changes in participation DPOs) . Moreover, 70,3% of the respondents link positive trends in their communities around PWD rights and inclusion with active work of their DPOs. Community members raised their awareness about the needs and abilities of PWDs, which led to a more positive view of diversity. Young volunteers from the communities actively participated in DPOs sub- grant projects.

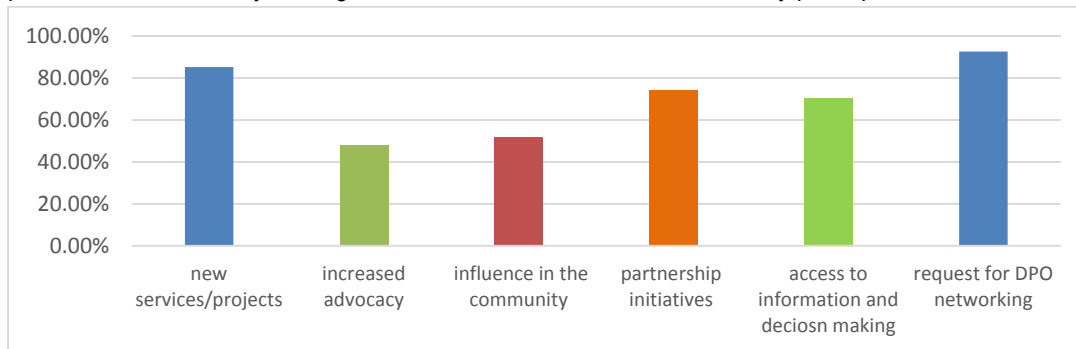
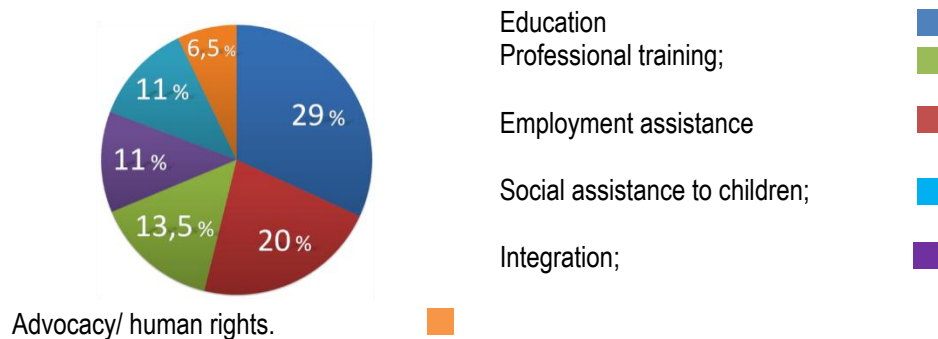


Figure 1: Positive changes in participating DPOs

The project helped to stimulate the work of DPOs and significantly improved **access to support services** provided by them for people with disabilities. Due to **22 sub-grants** and small financial support provided for follow-ups to training activities, **157 created/improved services** helped to increase PWD access to education, vocational training and employment opportunities, culture, sport and social support. These services were especially appreciated by the target population as they address hard-to-reach groups such as those who live in rural areas.

Figure 2: Established/improved services by type



New and improved services included inclusive education, respite care, psychological support for parents of children with disabilities, job placement for PWDs, training to promote integration of children with disabilities into community life, inclusive/accessible playground, new communication tools for non-verbal children, information services on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health to youth with mental and physical disorders, primary social rehabilitation of people with spinalinjury, and independent living skills for children in wheelchairs.

The implementing DPOs insured sustainability of these services and despite challenges continued implementation including small grants (69,23% of project participants reported that their organizations continued providing services established within the project) . This is an example of this small grants component contributes to sustainability. It can be challenging for NGO's to find the funds for start-up opportunities but the NGO's this project invested using the small-grants funding mechanism, independently found other opportunities to continue delivering the services following the conclusion of this project. This demonstrates that the services funded by the small grants mechanism met relevant needs of their community and



Tatyana Pukalo, sub-grant coordinator from Bobruisk

"Implementation of the small grant supported by ChildFund Belarus [under the USAID funded "Community Services to Vulnerable Groups" project] was a school of good management for our organization. It mobilized our resources and disciplined us. We learned a lot about planning, project management, and acquired new skills in monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy."

-Gennady Zolotaryov, Head of NGO "Invalidy-Spinalniki", Gomel

became integrated into the NGO's regular operations. As the result of service utilization children and adults with disabilities increased their opportunities to fully participate in community life. Participants engaged in opportunities to develop their talents and inner strengths, improved their coping abilities to withdraw with multiple environmental stresses and increased their opportunities for vocational training and employment.

"People with disabilities really want to work. Take me for example: before the start of the project I was unemployed. I always told my friends that I wanted to become a businesswoman, but they just laughed at me. I have a 2 level of disablement; no one is willing to hire a person with a disability. Today I get job offers both from non-governmental organizations and state services. My day is scheduled to the last minute." - Tatyana Pukalo, sub-grant coordinator from Bobruisk.

The added value of sub-grant implementation was increased capacity of implementing DPOs in project cycle management, M&E and advocacy. The implementing DPOs insured sustainability of these services, 69,23% of them report continuation of service provision once the subgrant support was used

The project encouraged **267 advocacy efforts** (against 117 planned in PMEP) by Belorussian DPOs and persons with disabilities. The advocacy efforts were concentrated on several main areas: lowering discrimination of PWDs, creating a non-barrier environment, promoting community-based coordinating councils on PWD issues, change legislation and development of inclusive education. The project supported different types of DPOs' advocacy efforts on the national and community levels through training on advocacy, targeted consultations, and Task Groups. Advocacy activities were also an integral part of the small grant projects supported by ChildFund.



Figure 3:Photo racing by PWDs and their families in Polotsk

Efforts on lowering discrimination of PWDs included a round table, Internet forum, and a number of publications. Efforts toward creating an environment free of barriers included trainings, letters to local administrations, monitoring of administrative and public buildings in the communities, and publications in mass media.

Establishment of local **councils on disability issues** - as a sustainable mechanism to ensure PWD participation in decision making - was promoted by ChildFund Belarus through training and follow-up assistance. Training on local councils on disability issues helped its participants to elaborate specific strategies aimed either to establish a local council (if one did not exist), or become members of the existing council (if they were not included yet) or provide active participation and advocacy by their DPO (if the DPO was already a member of the local council).

Efforts on promotion of coordinating councils on PWDs' issues in the communities included holding round tables, meetings with authorities .ChildFund's Task Group produced a Manual entitled "Local Multidisciplinary Council on Disability Issues" to provide guidelines for implementation of the Local Multidisciplinary Council on Disability Issues- a model that ensures participation of people with disabilities in decision making processes at the community level. PWD-leaders and activists of local DPOs in communities used the model to initiate and establish councils in 11 communities. This approach became one of the means to influence local policy implementation and its transformation towards recognition and protection of the human rights of people with disabilities.

ChildFund Belarus facilitated an ad-hoc **Task Force on Advocacy** that assisted two nationwide umbrella DPOs – Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and Youth with Disabilities and Belarusian Association of People in Wheelchairs - in their advocacy efforts aimed to increase integration and inclusion of people with disabilities. As a result the activities coordinated by ChildFund's Task Force on Advocacy 22 new initiatives aimed at improving life of children and adults with disabilities were developed. Among the most prominent strategic changes were the adoptions of a monitoring mechanism to ensure proper implementation of PWD human rights, a framework of social services contracting, introduction of a personal assistant for a person with a disability, and an independent living model, assisted job placement, and crisis support to families.

By September 2010 through the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, two crucial initiatives of the Task Force have been included in the national policy document including: Regulation of Council of Ministers of Republic of Belarus of 29 July, 2010 # 1126 «About approval of the National Complex Program on Social

Development for 2011-2015". These initiatives include the introduction of a personal assistant for children and adults with disabilities and improvement of social assistance, de-institutionalization and creation of an independent living model for people with disabilities. Implementation of these decisions will play a crucial role in expanding participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life and their integration in Belarusian society.

Inclusive education in vocational and higher education

For youth with disabilities, vocational and higher education may be the most important gateway to a full and productive life. There are several barriers to address to further education for students with disabilities, including how others have a low level of expectation of their performance. People with disabilities are often underestimated and their potential is limited given the misperception others may have of their full potential, interests, abilities and ambitions. The project promoted inclusive education, where children with and without disabilities are taught in the same classroom with the same curriculum, as opposed to children with disabilities being sent to a boarding school or other residential center or segregated within a school in a special education program. Inclusive education promotes integration of PWD in mainstream society and allows children to live with their families. ChildFund especially focused on the introduction and development of inclusive education in Belarusian educational institutions from the pre-school to higher education levels. In order to lead inclusive education capacity-building, ChildFund united university faculty, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Re-training Institute (continuing education institutes) instructors to become part of the National Trainers Team. National Trainers Team members become Master Trainers and experts in inclusive education. Master Trainers train teachers, school leaders, Ministry of Education officials, parents and children in inclusive education methodologies. Professors from all seven Belarusian universities have been trained in inclusive education and these faculty members are incorporating inclusive education in the curriculum—ensuring that all new teachers and other education specialists have the knowledge and awareness to provide an inclusive learning environment for all children. Interest in inclusive education is growing in Belarus and trainings are increasingly being covered through government and local community resources. Master trainers are becoming influential actors beyond the national context, sharing the inclusive education model with other newly-independent states.

Promotion of inclusive education was one of the project priorities in the last three project years. The project supported a series of round tables, meetings with the Task Group on Inclusive Education and the development of a Master Plan on Inclusive Education, series of sensitization workshops for educational authorities, preparation of National Concept paper on inclusive Education.

As a result of these activities including the collaboration between ChildFund partners the following key achievements are noted:

- Inclusive Education became a priority of the national agenda in education
- There is a National Master Plan on Inclusive Education
- National Trainers Team on Inclusive Education created and supported . Members of National Trainer's team are viewed as experts in the field and are invited to conferences in Russia and newly-independent states, such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan.
- An Inclusive Education Training Manual has been created.
- Inclusive Education has been integrated into the curriculum of teacher education programs in 4 out of 7 Belarusian universities and the Ministry of Education recommends its integration into all university's curriculum.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Education a National Concept on Inclusive Education developed (ChildFund and partner NGO participated in the Ministry of Education's Working Group on Concept development). The Concept was approved and entered into force on September 4, 2015.
- Pilot Inclusive Education programs are running smoothly and other schools and communities are interested in starting programs.
- More and more organizations and community members are petitioning for inclusive education. Government and local organizations are covering an increasingly larger share of training costs.

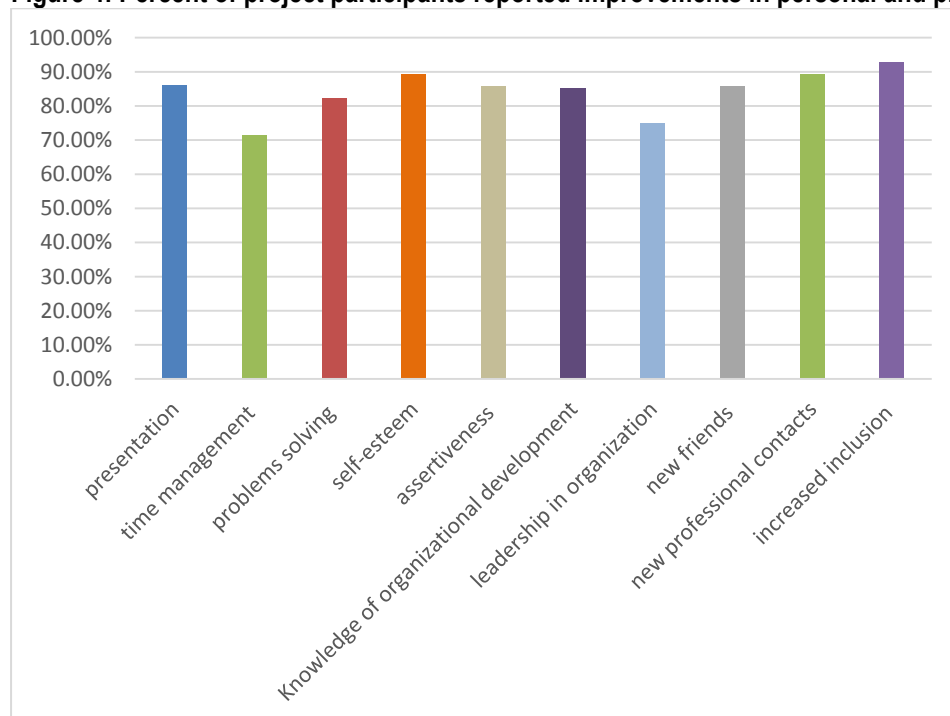
One of the major successes of the project was the Leadership without Limitations and advocacy Training courses. ChildFund's training course built the leadership and advocacy capacity of children, their parents and adults with disabilities. In a context where there are very low expectations for what people with disabilities can achieve and there are few opportunities for PWD to participate in community life and decision-making, PWDs and their families face issues of discrimination and disempowerment. The course helps PWDs and their families become aware of their rights and find and use their voice. Alumni of the course form peer-to-peer networks and use their new knowledge and skills to promote inclusion of PWD in social and economic life. They reported improvement of self-advocacy skills as well as introduction of changes in their organizations through participatory management and decision making, improved fundraising, PR, and human resources management, as well as improved partnership with other organizations and authorities.

As a result of the sub-grants, organization services and the leadership and advocacy courses for PWD, **children and adults with disabilities had increased opportunities to fully participate in community life.** Participants gained opportunities to recognize their strengths and develop their talents. Participants increased their self-esteem and assertiveness, improved their coping abilities and learned how to adapt to multiple environmental stresses, gained new friends and increased their professional networks (please, see Figure 4: Percent of project participants reported improvements in personal and professional life).

"The training helped me identify what I want from my life, and what are the most important things in life for me. Now I consider my disability as a gift that allows me to send a message to the other people about the limitless abilities that every person has and necessity to provide equal opportunities for everybody no matter what their physical conditions are. If you consider your disability as your fault you may spend your life behind the locked doors. I chose another way!"

-Natalya, a 16-year old girl who uses a wheelchair, participant of the Leadership without Limitation training course

Figure 4: Percent of project participants reported improvements in personal and professional life



II. METHODS OF ASSISTANCE

In order to ensure maximum impact and sustainability, the **Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities** project capacity building interventions mostly focused on individual and organizational levels of ecological model (as shown in Figure 5: ChildFund approach towards Inclusion of PWDs.). These interventions provided significant impact on community and society levels.

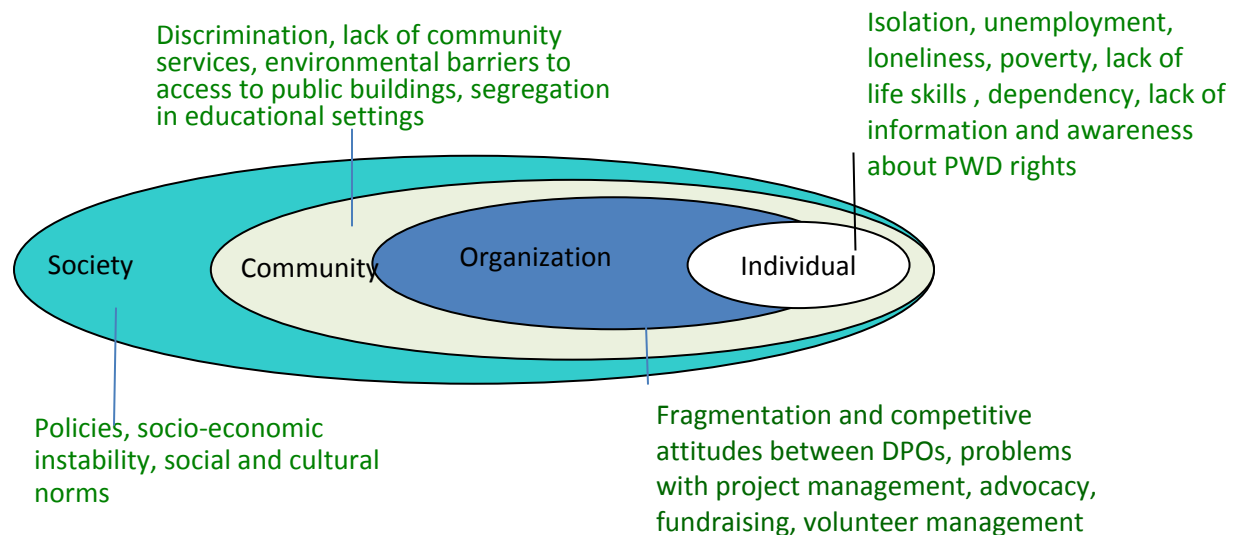


Figure 5: ChildFund approach towards Inclusion of PWDs

Individual level:

Leadership of people with disabilities is crucial in any successful efforts toward their greater inclusion. In order to effectively perform leadership role people with disabilities as well as their family members should develop a set of leadership and life skills. ChildFund trained children with disabilities and their parents in leadership and advocacy through the Leadership without Limitations and Advocacy training courses. Training focused on building participants' self-confidence, participation, decision-making and advocacy skills. ChildFund reinforced training outcomes providing the alumni of the training courses with small financial support to their initiatives ("learning –by-doing" approach). This approach proved its effectiveness. Alumni of the courses formed peer-to-peer networks and used their new knowledge and skills to promote inclusion of PWD in social and economic life, including non-discrimination, access to PWDs' rights to healthcare, employment, independent living and education.

Organizational level:

According to a participatory needs assessment conducted by ChildFund, the data showed a high demand for capacity building of organizations of persons with disabilities.. DPOs especially stressed their need for organizational development that would include strategic planning, project management, fundraising, human resources and volunteer management, advocacy. ChildFund built the capacity of PWD-led and PWD-focused NGOs and grassroots organizations through organizational development courses which are designed to improve the quality of the services to PWDs these organizations provide. Organizations received training in project management, results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation, sub-grant management, fundraising and proposal writing. The participating DPOs receive extensive training in advocacy and PWD rights and the resulting advocacy initiatives focus on reducing discrimination of PWDs, creating barrier-free environments, promoting community-based councils on PWD issues and the rights of PWDs at the community level.

Community level :

DPOs (including those that were trained within the project) were invited to apply for sub-grants to improve existing services to PWDs and establish new community-based services. These services include: respite care, psychological

support for parents of children with disabilities, self-help groups, training and job placement for PWDs, training to promote integration of children with disabilities into community life, inclusive playgrounds, new communication tools for non-verbal children, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health training for youth with disabilities, social rehabilitations for people with spinal injuries, programs that promote independent living skills for children in wheelchairs, dance classes for children in wheelchairs and theatre groups for children with disabilities. Many of these programs were implemented with the help of community volunteers, including youth. Projects funded through the sub-grant mechanism helped organizations improve their managerial capacity, master advocacy and public relation skills, and raise their profile in respective communities, contributing to increased local support for the programs, leading to greater sustainability.

National Level :

Participating DPOs have formed a professional network, amplifying the influence of their civic activism and allowing them to affect policy change at **the national level**. ChildFund supported a Task Force on Advocacy initiated by PWD leaders to promote legislative changes and a model of Multidisciplinary Community-based Committees on Disabilities, which provided a forum for PWD to provide honest feedback to policy makers, participate in community. In addition, the PWD organizations formed the National Advocacy Alliance on Inclusion, an advocacy network, which allows organizations to amplify their advocacy capacity and affect policy on a national level.

IV. KEY PROJECT SUCCESS FACTORS:

The following key factors contribute to the program's success:

- **Multi-level and Multi-faceted Approach** – Interventions at the individual, family, community, district, regional and national level. Focus on capacity-building, awareness-raising, networking, advocacy and policy change.
- **Coordination and Collaboration between Different Organizations:** including coordination and collaboration between the Ministry of Education, NGOs, grassroots organizations, local government, schools, the child protection system, etc.
- **Strong Partnerships that Create Partner Leadership and Ownership:** partner leadership and ownership has facilitated the adoption of the approaches and models on a scope larger than anticipated in the original project design.
- **Capacity-building for Sustainability:** most trainings of trainers are now conducted by Master Trainers, not ChildFund staff, and the training program on the Inclusive Education has been integrated into the curriculum of 4 out of 7 Universities, to date. The Ministry of Education has recommended the curriculum for all universities. Figure 5 demonstrates how training is increasingly conducted by alumni of training courses and sub-grantee organizations.

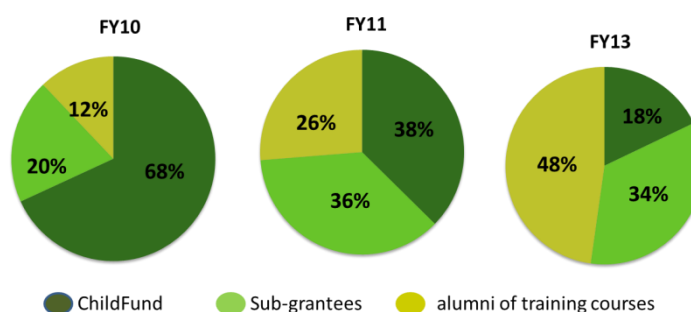


Figure 5: Capacity-building for Sustainability

- **Capacity to Work Strategically at the Policy Level:** ChildFund works within the parameters of the political system and views the government as a main partner and ally.
- **Large Cost and Resource Share:** government pays for education personnel, habilitation center infrastructure and operating costs, and is increasingly paying for training.
- **Time to Pilot, Reflect, Learn, and Evolve:** the 7 year project has allowed for project learning and evolution.



V. CHALLENGES/ CONSTRAINTS

- Several economic crises broke out in Belarus over the course of the project implementation and provided serious impediments to project implementation. For example, economic crises in March 2011 lead to devaluation of Belarusian ruble against the dollar by 189% in 2011. This led to rapid price growth for foodstuffs, gas, and oil. The inflation rate reached 116% by December 2011. The crisis affected the most vulnerable groups of the population, who are ChildFund Belarus' target groups. Some training activities with little or no high impact were cancelled with the approval of USAID AOR.
- Traditional competitive and suspicious attitudes between DPOs created impediments to network development. Child Fund facilitated opportunities for extensive open communication, experience exchange between the organizations, building personal relationships between its leaders. This strategy was very successful.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED

- Despite the favorable policy environment, education institutions of all tiers (preschool, secondary, and higher) are generally reluctant to initiate a move towards inclusion, to enroll children with disabilities into classes, and to question the current education practices as being ineffective. In order for the education system capacity to match the growing demands of official policy, its staff need to be sensitized, re-trained and supplied with new teaching methods and programs that are relevant to inclusive education.
- The trainers on inclusive education needs not only specific trainer's skills and technical expertise in inclusive education and disability issues but also set of leadership skills that help them to expand their role from being educator to community mobilizer
- The composition of the trainer's team should include the different categories of the participants (parents, NGOs, special education specialists, educators from universities and re-training institute). 70,3% of the respondents linked positive trends in their communities around PWD rights and inclusion with active work of their DPOs. Specialists from the local communities need external support and facilitation of their planning sessions and articulation of their priorities. As soon as this support is provided, they easily formulate their plans and actively advocate for its implementation.

ChildFund's approach to accompany small grant services with advocacy and fundraising efforts proved effective and helped to ensure sustainability of small grant interventions. Although it is too early to assess its impact, the first positive results appeared. For example, within a year following the completion of the small sub-grants, the Belarusian Children's Hospice raised approximately **\$ 2,746** (about 42% of the total project cost) for respite care through its fundraising telephone services supported through the project.

VII. IMPORTANCE FOR USAID

The project activities helped to relieve suffering of the most vulnerable population, demonstrate good will and support to the Belarusian people from the American people. The project enhanced the well-being of children and youth - the country's most precious resource. Their health and well-being are essential for the future society flourishing.

The project contributed to the achieving USAID overarching assistance goal in Belarus:

To support the Belarusian people in achieving a government that respects their democratic rights and fundamental freedoms. It was achieved through:

- Promotion and respect for human rights and freedoms
- Facilitation of positive systemic changes
- Strengthening civil society and civic participation

Implementation of basic human rights and freedoms:

Along with enhancement of social wellbeing of vulnerable populations the project exposed Belorussians to core values of social work (social and economic justice, equal opportunities, right for self-determination, making independent decisions, value of diversity) and helped people to understand their rights, empower them to take responsibilities and initiative, and fortified them for struggle.

Strengthen civil society and civic participation:

- NGO's managerial and technical capacity enhanced.
- NGOs produced visible and tangible results demonstrating general public effectiveness of this new public institutions.
- Representatives of vulnerable groups involved in NGO projects get opportunity of self-determination, expression of their opinion and influence political agenda. They are engaged in root out inequity, oppression, and discrimination and encouraged to facilitate social and economic opportunities.

The project promoted systemic changes

The project provides opportunities **to advocate** for the changes within our political, social systems that can provide the power and means for people to become free and responsible social beings. The project also helped people to participate in the political process which significantly affects the scope of alternatives that will be available to them (for instance, creation of Community Councils on Disability Issues, preparation of the proposals to the national policies, programs and strategies in area of disability and inclusive education).

VIII. OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project was implemented according to its annual work plans and approved budget. The table below lists all the activities conducted over the time of project implementation in 2008-2015 to support project objectives and achieve the planned target.

Financial assistance, capacity building interventions, and advocacy initiatives launched by ChildFund were all focused on increasing **leadership**, advocacy, and improving quality and access to community-based services run by PWD

associations. All of the targets planned for 2008-2015 were achieved; most of the results exceeded the planned ones (number of PWD-related services, number of children and adults with disabilities covered by services).

Figure 6 : Specific events and activities of the project 2008-2015

Support to PWD initiatives and community-based services and introduction and development of inclusive education	Support advocacy efforts by PWD grassroots organizations	Build the organizational, networking and advocacy capacity of grassroots organizations supporting PWD and their families
Project presentation for main stakeholders and partners	2 workshops on "Strategic approach to advocacy and public relations" and Advocacy Campaigns Advocacy Training Course (3 sessions)	Assessment of DPOs' needs in capacity building
Six (6) Calls for proposals , evaluation and selection of project proposals	Theme information meeting "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability"	Series of work group meetings on participatory design of the training course "Leadership without Boundaries"
Three (3) Workshops "Project design and proposal writing" and Individual consultations on proposal writing	Series of Task Force meetings "The model of multidisciplinary community-based committees on disability issues"	3 training courses for PWDs "Leadership without Boundaries" (4 sessions each)
22 Sub-grants for total amount of \$156 120,66	International training course on advocacy 1)"Self-advocacy 2) Leadership and advocacy in program development and policy change"	International Training Course on Inclusive Education (<i>three sessions</i>) and International workshop "Best practices in inclusive education"
Monitoring and evaluation of sub-grants	Two (2) experience exchange visits on advocacy for DPOs (Polotsk, Gomel)	Two (2) Forums of PWD leaders: Partnership without Limitations
Individual consultations and 3 afterward workshops for sub-grantees on project cycle management , M&E, Reporting	Theme information meeting and workshop "The model of multidisciplinary community-based committees on disability issues"	Basic Course on Volunteer Management (<i>two sessions</i>)
2 workshops for sub-grantees on PR and Mass Media Collaboration fundraising in order to ensure sustainability of PWD services	3 Round Tables on PWD issues 1)Discrimination of people with disability "and 2)"Partnership without Limitations", 3) Multidisciplinary community-based committees on disability issues" (Mozyr);	4 Local workshops:1) "Engagement of families of PWD in CSO activity" 2) "Employment and labor rehabilitation of PWD" 3)-4) "Barrier-free environment for people with disability"
Leadership Course for Youth with Disabilities and their Family-members	Publication of the manual/resource book "The model of multidisciplinary community-based committees on disability issues"	Training course for Parents Associations on organizational development of NGOs (3 sessions)
Training course on Leadership and Inclusive Education for Parents of Children with Disabilities (3 sessions)	Two meetings of the Task Force on Advocacy to prepare DPO's suggestions to new National programs	Parenting Skills Enhancement Course for parents with disabilities and TOT workshop

Two (2) training-of-trainers(TOT) courses on Inclusive Education	Technical and financial support to advocacy efforts by alumni of ChildFund Advocacy course and local DPOs	ToT on Social Interactive Theater
Series of working group meetings of inclusive education to complete training manual on inclusive education	Six (6) working meetings on DPO network development for inclusive education	2 workshops of self-help groups methodology
Publication of training manual on Inclusive education	Three (3) national round tables on inclusive education (Minsk, Baranovichi)	Two meetings of facilitators and leaders of self-help groups of parents of children with disabilities
Forty two (42) follow up activities by the participants of training programs	Six (6) meetings of the Expert Group on Inclusive Education to develop Master Plan on inclusive education	Four (4) strategic planning workshops for partner organizations from (Smorgon, Zhodino, Mozyr,
Five (5) Training on Inclusive Education for authorities (<i>Minsk, Baranovich, Mogilev</i>)	Roundtable discussion about draft Concept paper on inclusive education and follow-up actions	Three (3) working meetings of the National trainer's group on Inclusive education
Training/ workshops on inclusive education in communities by the National Trainer's team	Multidisciplinary working Group on development of Concept paper on inclusive education in Belarus (in collaboration with the Ministry of Education	Final Project Conference

The figures below illustrate the main outputs of Project implementation during 2008-2015:

- **3169** PWD –related specialists from **1151** PWD organizations were trained
- **77,5%** of them applied new knowledge and skills in their work with children and adults with disabilities and their family members;
- The project inspired and supported more than **267 advocacy efforts** by persons with disabilities, their family members and their organizations
- Twenty two (**22**) sub-grant projects for the total amount of **\$156,120** USD were awarded to NGOs and community-based organizations
- More than **157** new /improved PWD services were created as the result of project activities
- About **3,151** children with and without disabilities took part in inclusive services provided within the project
- About **2,821** adults with disabilities and their family members benefited from PWD services supported by the project
- **One (1)** NGO networking meeting was organized by ChildFund;
- **One (1)** planning meeting was conducted for partners at ChildFund's pilot site
- **Two (2)** working meetings of the National trainer's team conducted
- **Nine (9)** training sessions were conducted by National Trainers Team for **298** parents and educators ;
- **One (1) national round table** on inclusive education conducted
- **Concept on Inclusive Education** in Belarus finalized and submitted for official approval
- **Project Final** Conference for 80 specialists from all over Belarus conducted

IX. VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

In addition to providing follow-up support and expansion of current work, ChildFund Belarus and its partners have identified the following areas as key areas of work for the future:

1. Support the development of inclusive education in Belarus for all levels of education.

The development of inclusive education gained considerable momentum in Belarus: it has become the integral part of the national policy on education, the Concept Paper on Inclusive Education was recently adopted by the national authorities, and inclusive classrooms are successfully functioning in a significant number of pilot kindergartens, schools, and higher education institutions in all of the country's regions. The process is complemented with the new research, development of effective methods, and production of education materials. Importantly, the effort is produced by all stakeholders of inclusive education – national authorities, regional and local specialists, various NGOs, and parents' associations. However, inclusive education remains a novel approach for the national education system which is vulnerable to implementation challenges and other common pitfalls of development. To mitigate the risk of inclusive education turning into another nominal quantitative benchmark, a serious support and expertise needs to be provided, such as:

- Expansion of the cadre of Master trainers in inclusive education
- Integration of inclusive education curriculum into 100% of university teacher training programs
- Provide follow-up support to the Concept paper on inclusive education to ensure it actually leads to improved policy and practice.

2. Strengthen networking platforms for PWD organizations

Over the last decade, PWD organizations in Belarus made significant progress and developed their capacity in identifying their target groups, providing services that address the beneficiaries' needs, planning and carrying out advocacy work. The enhanced capacity enables PWD NGOs to be self-confident, independent, creative, and effective organizations that make a difference in the lives of children and people with disabilities as well as communities they serve. They also have built the reputation of competent partners who make a contribution to the thinking and practice in disability fields to state institutions that used to be monopolists in PWD service and policy generation. However, the experience of Belarusian PWD organizations of living in a *competitive* environment for resources weakens opportunities for *networking*, making the overall NGO reach rather *fragmented*. Still, being united around the common impact goal, each PWD organizations have a significant leeway for developing unique services while also benefiting from networking ties with other stakeholders. PWD organizations have a potential to cooperate as sectoral networks, advocacy networks, or service delivery networks. The development of effective networks of PWD organizations that possess strong social capital, leadership, and mutually beneficial partnership with donors could be achieved through:

- Encouraging the creation of awareness and advocacy platforms for mainstreaming inclusion of children and youth with disabilities (platforms for authorities, policymakers, specialists, parent organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders for networking and advocacy);
- Increasing capacity of community groups for inclusion (building the capacity of NGOs and parents' associations).

3. Advocate the development of services that promote job placement and job retention for youth and adults with disabilities.

In recent years, the challenges that a Belarusian with disabilities faces when attempting to pursue education and career became vocalized in the society. The efforts of NGOs and enthusiasts from education institutions generated an inspiring number of success stories such as university admittance, job placement, or expansion of the state approved list of

professions available to people with disabilities. However, this has been rather a series of individual cases than systemic changes that would establish a standard approach and open job market to people with disabilities. This need can be addressed through advocacy and services that promote job placement and job retention for youth and adults with disabilities:

- Provide training for children and youth with disabilities on leadership and social competencies (develop appropriate methodologies to communicate their issues; support children and youth with disabilities to apply their skills);
- Advocate for improved career opportunities for children and youth with disabilities (including access to vocational schools and colleges and universities; life skills training and economic strengthening; develop a model of independent living).